

Winter 2016

Pathos, Winter 2016

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Winter 2016 Volume 10 No. 2

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LITERARY MAGAZINE

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Trust Me

Alexis Day Erickson

Oil finger-painting on panel
18.5 x 24"



Letter from the Editor

Welcome to another edition of *Pathos Literary Magazine*, Portland State University's sole on-campus publication that serves our creative student community first and foremost. We had even more submissions this term than last term, which is the best circumstance we could have hoped for. Without gracious contributions from the brave artists, writers, journalists, and thinkers we offer this platform to, our publication wouldn't exist. So thank you.

It's no secret that winter term is always a trying one. The weather cools, the sun darkens, the nights are longer than the days. The world seems to beg our mammalian spirits to hibernate, to sleep, to survive the most introspective of the seasons. We were astounded to read and see so much daring work that reminded us of the best that these somber months hold: wisdom and knowledge waiting to be found in the darkened corners of consciousness, escape from bitter winds within precious memories of warmer days, new perspectives on old subjects, rest and solidarity around fires in our caves. Even though real life continues and school/work demands attention, the creative, human spirit powers through. We offer our deepest congratulations to those of you whose work follows, and invite all others to try their hands at publication in next term's issue.

While the cerebral gifts of winter are bountiful, we can't wait to see those that belong to the spring, with its vernal renewal and awakenings. We look forward to learning what the season's change awakens in you.

We present to you *Pathos Literary Magazine*...



To A from N on the Number 4

Nitya Prem

Squid tattoos escape our ankles
each night to swim throughout
our bedsheets together, tangled.
I want to cocoon into you,
forever entwined in the cozy
winter warm, where we will weave
dreams together from the
ether. In our golden years, let's
buy noisy toys for grandkids, and
when they ask after how we
met we will smile in each other's
eyes, remembering Trimet number
four up Division Street. We
talked Markus Aurelius, had
meditations, even Missed
Connections, catching up at the
Perdido Street Station.

Laurel Lake Reflections

Alexis Day Erickson

Acrylic & oil on panel

24 x 36"

Pink

J Olinger

Gouache on watercolor paper
7 x 10"





Rework

Jacob Adams

Wax, oil, acrylic, and powdered pigment on panel
16 x 20"

To Count

L. Hart



“LOOK AT THIS,” one of my classmates chuckled under her breath one morning from the computer screen next to me. Our class was more a work period than a lecture, so we were allowed to look at our Facebooks without retaliation if we had nothing left to do.

I leaned over. One of those e-cards—the kind with the old-fashioned men and women contrasting with snarky modern comments—with a joke about organization. I remember instantly prickling, tired of the endless voices saying, “Oh, I organized my books by color. I’m *so* OCD.” I want to ask them if they’ve ever retraced their steps from the couch to the hallway ten times, trying to get the exact pattern right while taking an even number of breaths. But I don’t.

Today though, I was done. I kept my face blank, humorless. “That’s . . . not really what it’s like though,” I said, not meeting her eyes. “I mean . . .” My voice grew quiet. “I’m not organized.”

I’m not sure if she heard my second comment, but she heard the first one. “That’s why it’s funny!” she said, brushing a strand of long blonde hair from her face. I blinked.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder affects 1 percent of the population, or 2.2 million people. People generally know just three things about it: OCD often involves hand washing, organizing, and counting. My own desk usually looks like a tornado hit it. If my OCD would cause me to organize, maybe it would be of some use.

OCD’s main trait is its variation. It may include organizing. It does often include obsession with cleanliness, usually less for tidiness and more to avoid a multitude of diseases, including AIDS, Ebola, and other fears. Compulsions may demand doing everything by tens—how many times we brush our hair, how many steps we take, how many times we tap our hands—to avoid someone dying or a world catastrophe.

But OCD can be more complex. When I was fourteen, I didn’t just tap my fingers ten times, I tapped out a precise movement through the air ten times. The *exact* same way, which could take the better part of my day to get quite right. And once I did it, I started all over. If I didn’t, my mother might die.

My life became tens.

We think we are horrible people if we get an intrusive, misfired thought. I’d had those thoughts about things I would never want to do—things that might even hurt people—since I was fourteen, but it didn’t come fully a problem until I was sixteen. The thoughts were vividly horrible and made me want to recoil, but I spent more and more time mulling them over until the thoughts bombarded me.

Unsurprisingly, OCD can lead to depression. Spending enough time and energy thinking we’re bad people or believing fate rests on our shoulders can do that.

“What if you had the thought that you were a banana?” my therapist asked me one day. My therapist specializes in OCD and other anxiety-related disorders. A man in his seventies, he always stares at me after saying something, silently prodding to me to admit whatever thoughts are bothering me, share my opinion on what I should do about them, or admit why this worry bothers me so much. Sometimes I wished he would just do the talking. I sat on the couch across from him, though often I wanted to lie down and stare up at the ceiling. Even seated, I avoided his eyes.

As I stared at him, the image of me as banana with a little thought bubble popped into my head. A therapist’s office always seems a strange place to laugh, but a hesitant chuckle escaped.

“Exactly,” he said, looking up from his notebook. “It’s absurd. You’d shrug and move on with your life. It’s a strange thought, but does it mean you’re a banana?”

My hands, always tightly wound together during these sessions, twisted. “Well, no,” I answered, feeling as though I was being forced to admit something important.

He nodded. “It’s the same with the rest of those thoughts. They don’t mean anything. Just because a thought pops into your head unbidden doesn’t make it true.”

When we first experience intrusive thoughts—thoughts that can be much less friendly than a banana—we don’t necessarily make the connection to OCD. As disturbing ideas sprang into my mind, I would wonder what they said about me. Even when I reminded myself how common intrusive thoughts could be with OCD, I didn’t believe it. I felt OCD was simply an excuse for what must be unconscious, unsettling desires.

OCD has a way of worming itself past logical reason. When I began engaging in more ritual-based OCD such as hand-tapping or retracing my steps, it felt as though some higher power was commanding me to do these things. I didn't think of the compulsion as God at first, just some sort of power I'd better listen to. At one point, I decided my compulsions couldn't be real because God wouldn't let some random force kill off someone I loved if I didn't retrace my steps correctly.

Which made sense.

Unfortunately, sense only lasts up to a point, and I soon came to believe the force was God. My family was religious, but we hardly ever attended church, so I had never been forced to sit through fiery sermons reeking with guilt. My family didn't practice that type of religion—our God loved people, and we didn't have to watch our every step for sin. There was no logical reason for my brain to conclude that God would strike someone down because I didn't pray right, or tap right, or count right. But it felt true.

One winter I worked myself into such a frenzy that it took me hours to fall asleep. I'd recite the same prayers over and over, usually on my knees. I'd angle my stance to avoid facing certain people's rooms or the slider or skylight—and other times I was supposed to face them. It got confusing. Every time I thought I was done, I wasn't. I'd repeat the prayer, the kneeling, the clasped hands until I eventually fell asleep, exhausted and cheeks wet.

No one really knows for sure what causes OCD. Reassuring, right? There are plenty of theories—the most prevalent being that it is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, perhaps serotonin levels. Studies show that areas of the brain behave differently in people with OCD, but scientists aren't completely sure what that means. One theory is that the brain circuits that control urges—such as hand washing or worrying—fail to function properly, which keeps people with OCD from dismissing those urges and moving on with their day. Most people could, but I simply can't.

I can't remember how I felt when I was first diagnosed with OCD. When I was a kid, it came and went, just enough for my mother to suspect. Most children have a few OCD-like tendencies: as the nursery rhyme goes, "Step on crack, break your mother's back." I didn't grow out of it, and when I was fourteen we realized I never would.

We tried therapists who ranged from nice but not helpful to plain unhelpful. One therapist worked on my sensitivity to certain materials and lights, which made me worry cars felt closer than they really were and curbs loomed higher. Sensory disorder often accompanies OCD. I actually loved the therapy—it included delightfully gigantic indoor swings.

When I was younger, I visited one therapist in a Vancouver high-rise. I stared out the office window down at the city laid out below—heights made me feel like I was flying, my most wished-for superhero power.

The woman's looks escape me now, but I remember her patronizing tone.

"Here," she said, handing me sheets of white paper. "Draw a picture."

"What of?"

"Anything," she said, giving me a tight smile. I sighed. Therapists' methods seemed strange to me. But I did—a scene with birds from *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, a children's book. When I explained, she stared at me like I was crazy. "The what?" she asked, humoring me.

"*A Series of Unfortunate Events*," I repeated, irritated at her ignorance. I didn't know that my future with OCD would be a continuous struggle to avert unfortunate events from happening.

Later, she told my parents her interpretations of my drawing. One: That I might need medication. Two: That I might need to be put away from other children. Three: I might be a danger to others. I didn't learn exactly what she said until many years later—my parents felt I worried enough already.

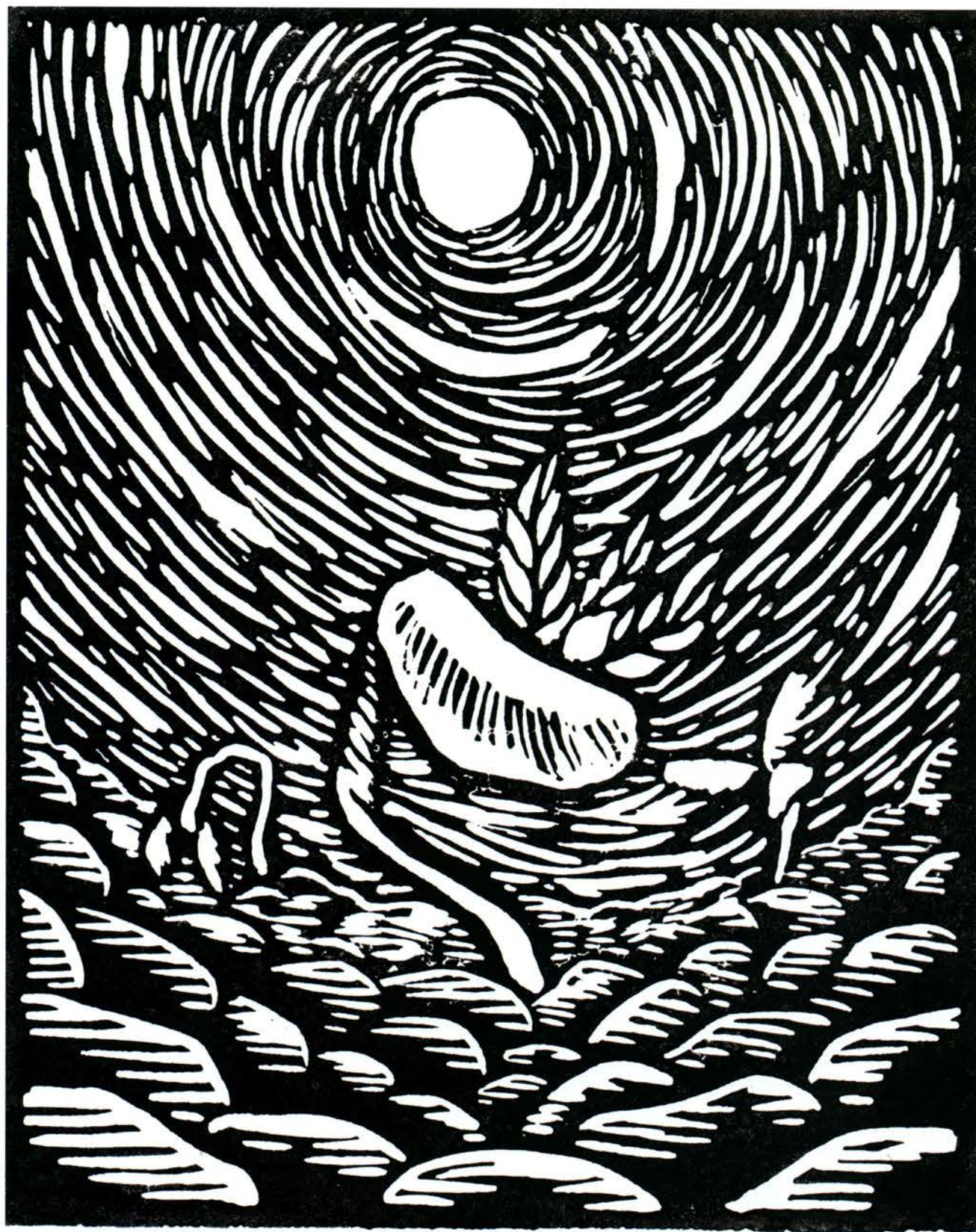
All because I drew a picture of black birds.

There are medications, but the risk of developing depression and suicidal thoughts as side effects scared me too much to try them—I already felt bad enough. Instead, I've combatted my OCD with cognitive behavioral therapy.

Rather than telling me to "Just stop it," cognitive behavioral therapy gives me the tools to stop. If I tapped my fingers ten times, then my homework was to tap just nine times, then seven, then three. Eventually my goal was to tap not at all, but first I defied my OCD in smaller, manageable ways. I'd sit in the backseat on the way home from therapy, trying to change the count without panicking.

If I have an intrusive thought, cognitive behavioral therapy doesn't tell me to ignore it, but just resist the urge to respond. Even as horrible images pop into my head, I don't try to stop them—instead, I focus on my bowl of soup while horror plays in the background of my mind until my brain gets so bored with it that it disappears.

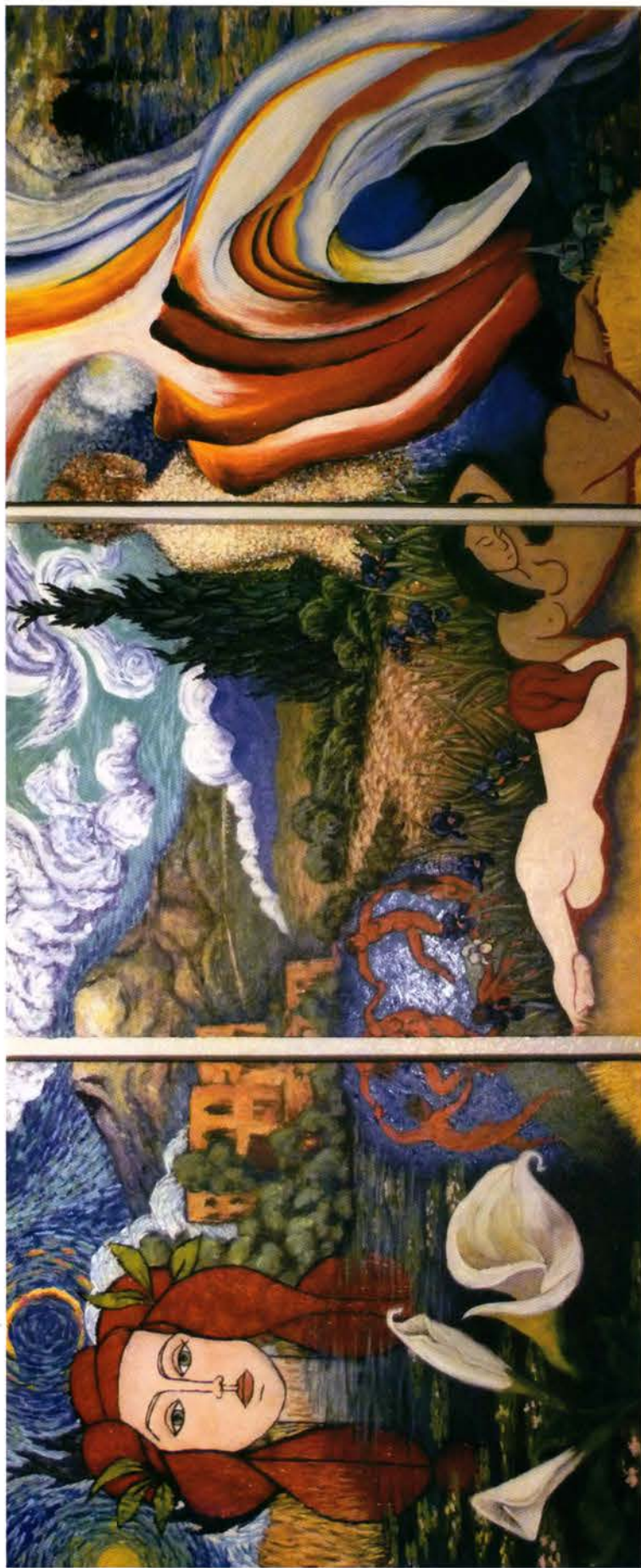
People with OCD struggle to escape our minds—but so do people with social anxiety, depression, or even just a bad memory or a nagging worry over failing a test. No matter how much they try to distract themselves, the worry is still there. They can't escape it. My OCD has helped me to become better educated on how to deal with my mind, but I still wish more people would educate themselves, even if it's just with a reminder that OCD is not an adjective.



Transference

Kerstin A. La Cross

Linoleum print on paper
8 x 10"



Forgotten Muse
Shannon Merrigan
 Acrylic on canvas
 20 x 48", triptych



The Great American Procrastination

Jocelyn Loyd

I can't taste the matcha mama made. It's just too hot for pleasure.

The tea streams in the cup to my left on a stack of broken-spined paperback novels. My hand grips the pen hovering like a bird over the blankest notepad ever to exist.

I should sip the tea and be sophisticated, right?

I could go from coffee to tea to sherry to martinis—though I don't have the liver of Truman Capote.

Instead the mug sweats circles on a copy of *In Cold Blood*. The great American novel waits to be written. Again.

This time by yours truly, the great American novelist with shit for discipline skills. Subway riders and drag queens and frizzy red hair—images rotating through my mind.

It's a picture show moving too fast to record. I sigh so deep my lungs may collapse.

The blankest notepad ever to exist is closed as I finally force the matcha mama made down my throat. It burns so good because it's 3:00 a.m. and I may as well be dead.

Triptych

Nitya Prem

I

Red and white
are the color
of medpacks
because they
share a secret
with muscle
and bone.

II

Always been sharp
full of angles
thrown into
a skinny sack
poking out in
weird places.

III

Break the pieces
on the ground
riverdance
on top of that shit
turn it into dust
fly away
with the wind.

A Long Walk Home

Sol Ontiveros

The clubs of my feet may rot
before I can finally pull them from this wet pavement
that sticks to my shoes like hot ink.

Some nights as I walk alone,
the stars laugh,

and taillights smeared red against buildings, waiting,
take their place in the hills.

Though I may sometimes walk in shame,
what other way is there for me
than the long walk home?

Summer Solstice in Salacgrīva, Latvia

Flannery Mack

*Līgotāji, līgotāji, līgo, līgo! Nav vairs tālu
Jāņa diena: līgo! Ši dieniņa, rītdieniņa,
līgo, līgo! Parīt pate Jāņa diena, līgo!*

ON THE BANKS of the Salaca River, moments from the border with Estonia in rural Northern Latvia, there is a farm called Rostes. In the summer of 2015, I spent two weeks there with my younger sister Sage as WWOOF (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) volunteers. Nestled on twelve hectares of land just between the cities of Ainaži and Salacgrīva, Rostes is enclosed by a long, dusty road to the west, vast stretches of field and forest all around, and the wandering, crooked river bordered by red sandstone walls and caves to the east.

The house itself is a Soviet-era fourplex, with stark cement walls closing in a home bursting with creativity. Its inhabitants are Clare—a Florida native, cook, weaver, and artist—and her husband Edgars—Latvian-born, fantastically well-traveled, a carpenter and potter and snowshoe maker—and their dog Pedro, two goats called Emma and Betty, and a handful of chickens. The house had gone unoccupied for more than a decade, and Clare and Edgars were two months into beginning a new life there. The nearest neighbors were miles away.



Yet even in this remoteness, there was no sense of despair or loneliness. The land itself was enchanting. To walk along the dusty road was to be amazed by fields brimming with daisies, pink-and-purple wildflowers, and great storks in massive nests topping each telephone pole. The garden and yard were overgrown; the barn was roofless and in complete disrepair. Clare and Edgars had built a greenhouse and outdoor compost toilet and were working on establishing beehives. I watched, mesmerized, at the sight of Edgars introducing an unruly swarm of wild bees to a wooden hive in the yard behind the house. Magically, the bees crawled one by one into their new home.

The days and nights at Rostes were busy. Edgars and his friend Mārtiņš worked in the heat of the day to build a roof for the barn. Sage and I were equipped with rubber work boots, the iron heads of a rake and hoe fitted onto birch branches, and put to work preparing a field to plant potatoes and oats. Unaccustomed as we were to demanding physical labor, this was an agony. We ended each day with dirt caked thick under our nails, covered in fly and mosquito bites, sore over our entire bodies. But the days and nights were also filled with music because Edgars, his brother Aigars, and Mārtiņš sang while they worked. We enjoyed homebrewed red clover wine—its delicate flavor and sweetness unbelievably refreshing—and sour beers gifted by a friend who owned a small brewery alongside the hearty lunches and dinners Clare cooked for us. These beverages fueled hours of storytelling, bonfires, improvised drumming, and drawing in the red dirt of a small cave along the banks of the Salaca once the work day was over.



*Par gadskārtu Jānīts nāca, līgo! Līgo!
Savus bērņus apraudzīt! Līgo!
Vai tie ēda, vai tie dzēra, līgo, līgo!
Vai Jānīti, daudzinaja? Līgo!*

Our stay at Rostes fell over the summer solstice. During the summer, the sun rises around four in the morning and sets, briefly, around midnight, leaving an evening of extended twilight in which fine details of the trees above can be discerned against a greenish-blue sky. The midsummer is a time when everything is in full bloom, at its most alive, both in nature and among humans. As a celebration of the shortest

night and longest day of the year—particularly striking in a country so far north—the midsummer is about connecting with nature. City-dwelling Latvians flock to the countryside to celebrate in the fields and forests with of family or friends. Wreaths of birch and oak and wildflowers decorate houses, gates, animals, and people. Women wear crowns woven of wildflowers and grasses; men wear crowns of oak leaves. There is an old belief that ferns blossom on this night. These mythological flowers are said to be invisible, but those that find them will experience love and happiness.

The countryside rings with songs for weeks leading up to the solstice. There are thousands of *Jānu* songs with endlessly adaptable melodies. Singers are expected to improvise new lyrics as the festivities progress, drawing inspiration from the fire, the company, the malty beer, even the spirit of the night. Newcomers find the songs approachable because they all have the refrain “*Līgo, līgo!*” People light bonfires and stay up all night to greet the new day. To do otherwise is to bring on a summer of tiredness and mosquito bites.

In the days leading up to the solstice, we turned from harvesting mint leaves on river banks teeming with glittering dragonflies and planting potatoes in a field that contained more tangled roots than dirt to a distinctly more fascinating activity. One rainy morning, Edgars, Sage and I tramped through the tall grass to a grove of thin young trees crowding a spot where Clare hoped to establish an orchard. Edgars took hold of one of the trees and, in one solid swing, chopped it with a hatchet and tossed it aside into the grass. Passing the hatchet to my sister and a saw to me, he told us to cut the trees as close to the ground as we could and stack them into piles to be taken down to the field near the river. They were going to be woven into the walls of a gypsy sauna. The idea behind a gypsy sauna, Clare told us, is that it is made entirely out of materials foraged off the land. It is meant to have a short lifespan so that it can be abandoned to nature. Even in the moment, we were electrified with wonder that Clare, weaver of carpets, could also weave walls.



Sage and I cut trees all day, breaking briefly for lunch before facing the rain, sawdust, snails, and mud once more. We cut hundreds of trees. Our hands grew numb to their new blisters and, in spite of the unrelenting rain, our speed and accuracy improved as the hours passed. We carried the trees down to the field, where Edgars, Aigars, and Mārtiņš had constructed a birchwood frame with an old bicycle wheel serving as a vent in the roof.

Edgars took a trunk in his hands and showed us how to weave it through the frame, being sure to press each layer tightly together so that no heat from the hearth could escape. We spent the afternoon weaving trees with three Latvian men who played reggae-pop and traditional midsummer folk music off a small set of portable speakers. Aigars and Mārtiņš made trips to the river to gather logs and stones to build up the fireplace at the sauna's center. Edgars carefully arranged the stones into a heap. He started a small fire beneath the stones we kept smoldering for five days. We insulated the roof with grass and old tarps. Edgars and Aigars built birch benches along the sauna's inner wall to maximize contact with the rising steam. Sage and Madara, another holiday guest, and I were sent off to collect leafy birch and oak branches to tie into bundles—called *slota*—to massage each other with while we sweated together.

*Nāc nākdama, Jāņu diena, līgo, līgo!
Tēv ir daudz gaidītāju, līgo!
Govis gaida zāļu kroņu, līgo, līgo!
Meitas skaistas līgošanas, līgo!*

We'd known that Rostes was going to be “party central” (Aigars' words) for the holiday, but we hadn't realized all this meant. We spent that Saturday—a free day from volunteer work for Sage and me—planning the feast with Clare, making grocery lists, and baking bread most of the morning, leaving the loaves to rise in the sun on the hood of Clare's van and then shuttling them to an antiquated gas oven housed in a spare bedroom. In late afternoon, the first guests arrived—Gatis, Mathilde, and their eighteen-month-old son Leon, a LatvianFrench family that drove to Rostes in a blue bus outfitted with a kitchen and beds. Next came the halfAmerican, halfLatvian Alexandra, along with her quiet Siberian husband whose name we never learned, and her red-mulleted baby Romeo.

Around the time the sky had shifted to a paler shade of blue, Mathilde, Clare, Sage, Madara, and I started preparing dinner. The task at first seemed daunting. Clare's kitchen was equipped primarily with things she could grow or make herself, and because of the recent move those were mostly jarred and preserved vegetables, potatoes, onions, yogurt,

and dried herbs and spices. But somehow, as if by magic, as we started to cook, a beautiful meal fell into place. Alexandra brought groceries from the city in bags containing such exotic items as bananas, avocados, apples, cherry tomatoes, cheese, and a chunk of salty, fatty pork. More guests started to arrive, parking cars on the lawn and bringing all kinds of treasures up to the kitchen. Each guest would wander into the tiny kitchen, hug and shake hands with everyone there, then present a smoked fish or fresh cheese with caraway seeds (a specialty for the midsummer holiday) or potato salad or homebrewed wine or beer. With each arrival, our menu became more festive. With each new guest, we raised our glasses and declared a toast to friendship, to the holiday, to the food. The kitchen was busy and crowded, but everyone wanted to be in the heart of the home in that moment.

We squeezed everyone into the banquet hall (a room usually used for drying laundry) and sat down to a beautiful feast amid cheers of “*labu apetiti!*” The table groaned under a huge smoked fish, breads and cheeses, potatoes and onions baked in béchamel, a salad with herbs and cherry tomatoes, pureed beans with roasted red peppers, and *rasols*—a Latvian party dish of pickles, ham, potatoes, onions, and a generous bath of mayonnaise. We sang, got to know each other, and laughed raucously, enjoying one another’s company as we ate. After the dinner plates had been cleared and the after-dinner cigarettes had been smoked, we wandered down to the sauna. We sat together sweating and singing songs and telling stories and passing a bottle of beer around. When the heat became too much, we went down one by one to swim in the muddy river—to rinse off the sweat, breathe in the clear night air, be carried gently by the current before returning to sauna once more. No feeling compares to the complete vulnerability of your naked body so consumed by heat and steam you almost can’t breathe. With a spinning head and a floating body you inhale the thick hot air, you feel the micro-droplets of water stick almost painfully to your bronchial walls, while each exhale purges your soul of all preoccupations not devoted to this one simple act. Floating in the river brings many forms of relief, not the least of which is how easy and natural breath seems when the oppressive heat of the sauna no longer piles on top and around you.



The next morning started out slow and lazy. People gathered on the lawn drinking coffee, eating melon, and watching Leon and Romeo play. Sage, Mathilde, Madara, Clare and I did party food prep, baking desserts, peeling potatoes, and making sauces. Edgars and Mārtiņš spent the day laying fires to be set off in succession throughout the night. Aigars began preparing a cauldron of fish soup suspended between two trees in the yard, which he tended all day and most of the night.

We started—and sustained—that night’s feast with shots of apple and banana liquor taken in tiny decorative glasses. Clare and Edgars bought some beautiful smoked mackerel from their fisherman neighbor, who spent the day before the solstice outside the largest grocery store in Salacgrīva, his bicycle laden with baskets of freshly-caught smoked fish he covertly sold to patrons. We tore chunks golden and fragrant with oil from it with our hands and ate them on pieces of soft grainy bread. There was also potato salad, a carrot-and-chickpea salad, *šasliks*—skewered chicken and chunks of lemon roasted over a fire—spongy dark bread, cheese with caraway seeds, baba ghanouj, a mountain of hummus, and beer. Then there was the array of desserts: Mathilde, with her French sensibility, made a buttery rhubarb-and-banana crumble, while Sage baked a blackcurrant-cardamom-lingonberry cake we ate with a sweet yogurt pastry cream.

Sieru, sieru, Jāņa mâte, ligo, ligo!
Tev ir govīs laidarāi, ligo!
Alu, alu, Jāņa tēvs, ligo, ligo!
Tev ir mieži tīrumāi. Ligo!

The party dissipated to keep Aigars and his soup company. I stayed in the banquet hall with Madara, Clare, and Mārtiņš. We nibbled leftovers and opened the windows to watch the rain while we told stories. It’s tradition to light bonfires and stay up all night to see the new sunrise. Despite the rain, we went out to enjoy one of Edgars’ constructions: a tall, witchy pile of sticks in the yard. The rain-soaked wood sent wild sparks high into the sky, which was a deep but still faintly luminescent blue. The fire burned and crackled until it collapsed into a glorious shimmering puddle. As the fire burned itself down, we leapt over the remains, chanting half-verses of *Ligo* songs. Edgars and Mārtiņš moved on to more fires; Clare, Madara, and I stood by Aigars’ soup, sheltering from the rain and warming up in the cookpot’s lemony steam. I found myself looking up at the sky’s growing light and resolving that I had seen enough of the sunrise to justify going back to the house to sleep.

A few days later, Sage and I made our way back to our own lives. We left Rostes determined to return someday, certain we would never forget the loving display of community we had seen. Some guests had traveled for hours, crossing countries

and oceans to get to Rostes so they could celebrate with friends. As we climbed into a bus on the Via Baltica, the highway would take us from Salacgrīva to Rīga, the words “*līgo, līgo*” were still ringing in my mind. I later learned that the word means “swing” or “sway,” like trees in the wind. It made perfect sense that Latvians’ most beloved holiday was enveloped in the collective chanting of this powerful image.

Latvia has only been an independent country since 1991. Their history is one of almost continuous subjugation, most recently by Germany and Russia. During Soviet rule, Latvians expressed their desire for independence through songs that expressed their distinct cultural identity, culminating in the so-called Singing Revolution in the late 1980s. A sense of limitless hope interwoven with a deep sadness and a sharp awareness of the not-too-distant past was a striking feature of many Latvians my sister and I met. But Latvians do not break in the face of difficulty. Like trees, they lean. They lean, knowing they have power. After all, what can’t people do who weave walls with their hands?

Lean into the gradually shortening days, knowing that days with no sunlight are coming. Lean, because after that, there will be another day when the light never fades. Lean into life.

*Iesim iekšā skatīties, līgo, līgo!
Kāda Jāņa istabiņa: līgo!
Izrotāta, izpuškota, līgo, līgo!
Pati saule vidū spīd. Līgo!*



American Guantanamera

Alex Diaz-Hui

If you truly are a sincere man,
then you want to go where the palm trees grow. Go to VisitFlorida.com,
get your life insurance from AARP,
and remember LegalZoom makes it easy to write your will.

I buy green glasses from LensCrafters to make poetry clear.
They burn bright because I went to Jared.
Wound deer with our poems, brought to you by Cabela's:
You'll be practically invisible with our new line of camouflage.

Buy white roses from 1-800-FLOWERS.
Discounts in July like it's January.
Find a true lover at eHarmony, this week free!
Or maybe a helping hand on Yelp.

Anyone can buy topsoil from A-Boy,
and anyone can get lucky in Atlantic City.
The Marriott overlooks a beautiful mountain stream
with a buffet featuring delights from the sea.





Linger (previous)

Ariel Martin-Reed

Printed digital photograph
27 x 41"



Nice

Daisy Feller

Nice is nice, at least that's what they say. It's the type of place where you can forget who you are and be anyone you choose. In my case, that meant losing the anxious, messy, unsociable, homebody I had been in Oregon and becoming a wild, spontaneous, fashionably underdressed whirlwind of American brashness and careless French sophistication. Strolling barefoot down the Promenade des Arts and getting my ear pierced by a man who barely spoke English was the type of adventure only girls in films with long flowing hair and tinkling laughter experience—romance.

I was planning to walk the beach alone that night, but a friend staying nearby convinced me to pick up a bottle of champagne at the Mono Prix and spend the evening with him. Along the way, we ran into his hostel roommate. Not fully understanding what came over me—me, who was usually too shy to say a word to a stranger—I urged him to join us.

His name was Lex Goodman and he was everything I had been trying to leave behind: awkwardly stumbling over his feet and words and dressed like an absolute tourist, in tube socks no less. My friend disappeared into the night behind a multicolored sundress, and we were left alone. I spoke loudly, leaning toward Lex on the rocky beach to look into his eyes while he looked at his feet.

"I'm sorry, I'm nervous."

"I am too." Not about telling him to kiss me after walking me home—I had either mercy or fear enough not to do it—but of leaving myself, who would never have come out drinking with a strangers on a foreign beach, for this romantic free spirit who had the power and charisma to make *someone else* feel nervous.

He asked me to meet him the next night, and either for fear of ruining the mystery of one perfect, awkward evening or because the shoddy wi-fi prevented me from emailing, I never spoke to him again. I spent my last night in Nice alone, carrying on the act that my smudged eyeliner and torn flannel shirt were emblems of effortless cool rather than neon signs illuminating that I, like everyone who runs away to Nice and away from themselves, was simply a mess.

Rose City

Marisol Moreno Ortiz

The city lights become the words for me to say how I am lost. Across the street a woman sits waiting for the bus to come and take her hope. Her hands are wrinkled and white against the black cover of the book she is reading. How can literature save me? With its water that walks beneath the bridges and sky. All along my doubt was wrong with its signature of questionable plays. My eyes stare at the reflected doorknob: *Is it locked?* It is, my mind answers. Trust your eyes with the thorns that blur your vision. The Rose City is nothing but rain that helps you sleep and breathe as you wait for the bus to take you home.

Ophelia's Rest

Asya Volkova

Colored pencil and
ink on paper
4 x 6"









FUK-BOY

Inna Leonchik

Watercolor, acrylic, ink on panel
12 x 24", diptych

DRINK AARDVARK MILK,” said the pen drawing hanging on the wall—a thick, fleshy sandwich wearing a hat. *Goddamn these half-baked postmodern conceptualizations*, thought Clive from the barista station, where he had to look at the hatted sandwich every day. It had begun invading his dreams. The previous night, he had gone on a date with it. The sandwich had ordered a hamburger at the local diner and dream-Clive sat across from it wondering at this blatant form of cannibalism.

He wondered what aardvark milk tasted like, then wondered if he would ever know. Clive began thinking about all the things he would never know for certain. Lost in his existential crisis, Clive burned his hand on the steam wand and jumped, hissing.

“I have a bus to catch,” complained the patron at the counter. The patron had bright orange hair. She was annoyed at Clive for feeling pain. It proved his humanity and forced her to acknowledge he was not a flesh-and-blood Keurig who existed solely to smile and seep caffeinated goop into paper cups.

“Do you know what aardvark milk tastes like?” Clive asked.

“I’m lactose intolerant.”

The orange-haired patron bustled out of the coffee shop and left Clive alone with the hatted sandwich. That was it for the morning rush. It would be quiet until noon. Clive sucked on his burned hand and tried not to feel like a skin-covered Keurig. He went to the bathroom and cried.

Later that day, the hatted sandwich walked in the front door. It was about the size of a tween, and its silvery hat glistened in the fluorescent light. The sandwich ordered a cappuccino in a polite voice and went to sit at a corner table. Clive brought the cappuccino over and sat down across the table.

“Why do you suggest drinking aardvark milk?” Clive asked in a reverent whisper.

“Aardvark milk isn’t something one talks about in public. Everyone knows that.”

“I didn’t.”

“It is presumptuous to assume that I meant *you* when I said *everyone*. Learn some humility.”

“OK,” Clive said.

The sandwich sipped. “This cappuccino is shit.”

“Life is shit. Therefore this cappuccino reflects life,” said Clive, feeling smart.

It was not long afterward that Clive and the sandwich decided to start seeing each other. For Clive especially, this was a big step. Clive had a difficult time committing. He could not even remember the last time he read a whole book. *But*, he thought to himself, *this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity*.

“You don’t think I’m a fleshy Keurig?” Clive asked one evening.

“Don’t be stupid,” said the sandwich.

“Thank you,” said Clive, feeling lucky indeed. The hatted sandwich had a beautiful flat along a busy main street. It was tastefully decorated, although the bathroom was cluttered with empty condiment bottles. The first time Clive stayed over was magical, except that the sandwich refused to remove its hat

during sex. Clive began to wonder whether this was due to premature balding but felt it was too awkward to bring up.

Clive would spend his days making coffee and smiling at the picture of his partner. Occasionally he would find stray sesame seeds in his hair and clothes. They would fall off him like dandruff and bounce merrily to the floor. It made him feel special. He let it drop a few times that he was dating the subject of the sketch, and pretty soon all the regulars knew. They were all complimentary, and they asked him what aardvark milk tasted like.

“Buttery,” Clive lied, ashamed to say he still had no idea.

“You would think you’d know by now,” said Clive’s manager, the only person Clive told about his apprehension.

“I think it’s only fair to expect some secrets,” Clive said. “We haven’t known each other too long.”

“You would think it would be one of those things that came up right away.”

“You would?”

“Maybe not in this modern day and age,” said the manager. She was old. “Is the sex good?”

“Buttery,” said Clive. He resolved to ask about the aardvark milk that evening and spent the rest of the day hyperventilating.

The door to the sandwich’s apartment was closed. He leaned against it, out of breath from running and hyperventilating. He heard laughter from the other side, and his heart leapt. He opened the door.

There was his beautiful, hatted sandwich sitting in bed with a young woman. Both were naked. Looking closer, Clive recognized the orange-haired patron from the coffee shop.

“You said you were lactose intolerant!” cried Clive, pointing at the woman. “I cried in the bathroom!”

“Calm down, for God’s sake,” said the sandwich calmly.

“And the aardvark milk?” Clive demanded.

“It’s not what it looks like,” said the sandwich, but sesame seeds cascaded from the woman’s bright orange hair and bounced on the floor.

Clive did not show up for work the next day, or the next. The manager took away the sketch of the hatted sandwich; someone had broken into the coffee shop and spray-painted Sauerkraut across it in angry red letters (such obscenity was not encouraged in child-friendly establishments). The news that Clive’s body had been dredged up from the river followed soon after.

Later that week, a small bottle of viscous brownish-green liquid mysteriously appeared on the coffee shop doorstep.

“Straight from the teat,” read the attached note.

“Sorry about everything.”

“Alternative to soy,” the manager wrote on the menu, unsure what else to do with it.

It became quite a hit with the customers, so much so that the line stretched out the door and down the street. The manager, run off her feet by this sudden influx of aardvark milk enthusiasts, decided to buy a Keurig.

She named it Clive.

Creature of Comfort

J Olinger

Aquatint/intaglio on Arches paper

7 x 10"



Fire Side

Alexis Day Erickson

Acrylic and oil on panel

23.5 x 30"



THE ITALIAN HALL DISASTER

1913. THE WORKERS OF THE LARGEST COPPER
MINING COMPANY IN NORTHERN MICHIGAN
WERE ON STRIKE.



ON CHRISTMAS EVE, MANY OF THE STRIKERS AND THEIR
FAMILIES GATHERED FOR A HOLIDAY PARTY.



OVER 400 GUESTS FILLED THE ITALIAN HALL, A
SECOND FLOOR SPACE AT THE TOP OF A STEEP STAIR CASE.



AT SOME POINT, SOMEONE SHOUTED **"FIRE!"**



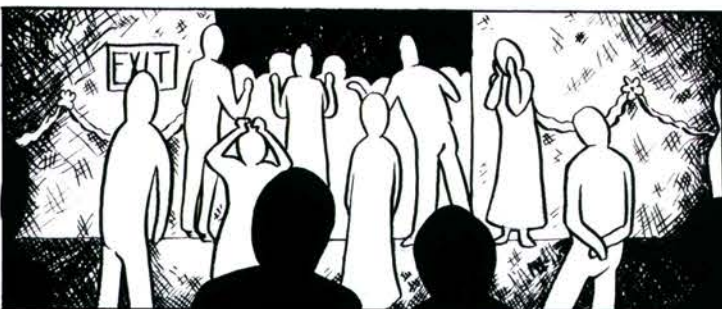
THE GUESTS PANICKED AND RUSHED FOR THE EXIT.

THE DOORS OPENED INWARDS; THE WEIGHT OF THE
FRANTIC GUESTS PRESSED THEM SHUT.



WITNESSES RECALL SEEING A MAN WEARING
AN ANTI-UNION BUTTON AT THE PARTY.

73 MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN WERE
CRUSHED TO DEATH.



THERE WAS NO FIRE.



The F-Month

W.R. Soasey

February's bleak hand smears
a helmet sky over the
bony twitching fingers of
naked trees raised in surrender.

My twice-cooked heart thumps
a gray dripping daze, which
lays a fog that snakes its
way into another autonomic day.

The Italian Hall Disaster (previous)

Kerstin A. La Cross

Ink on Bristol paper
11 x 14"



Reflections of a Universe Within

Shannon Merrigan

Acrylic on canvas
12 x 20"

The Universe

Jocelyn Loyd



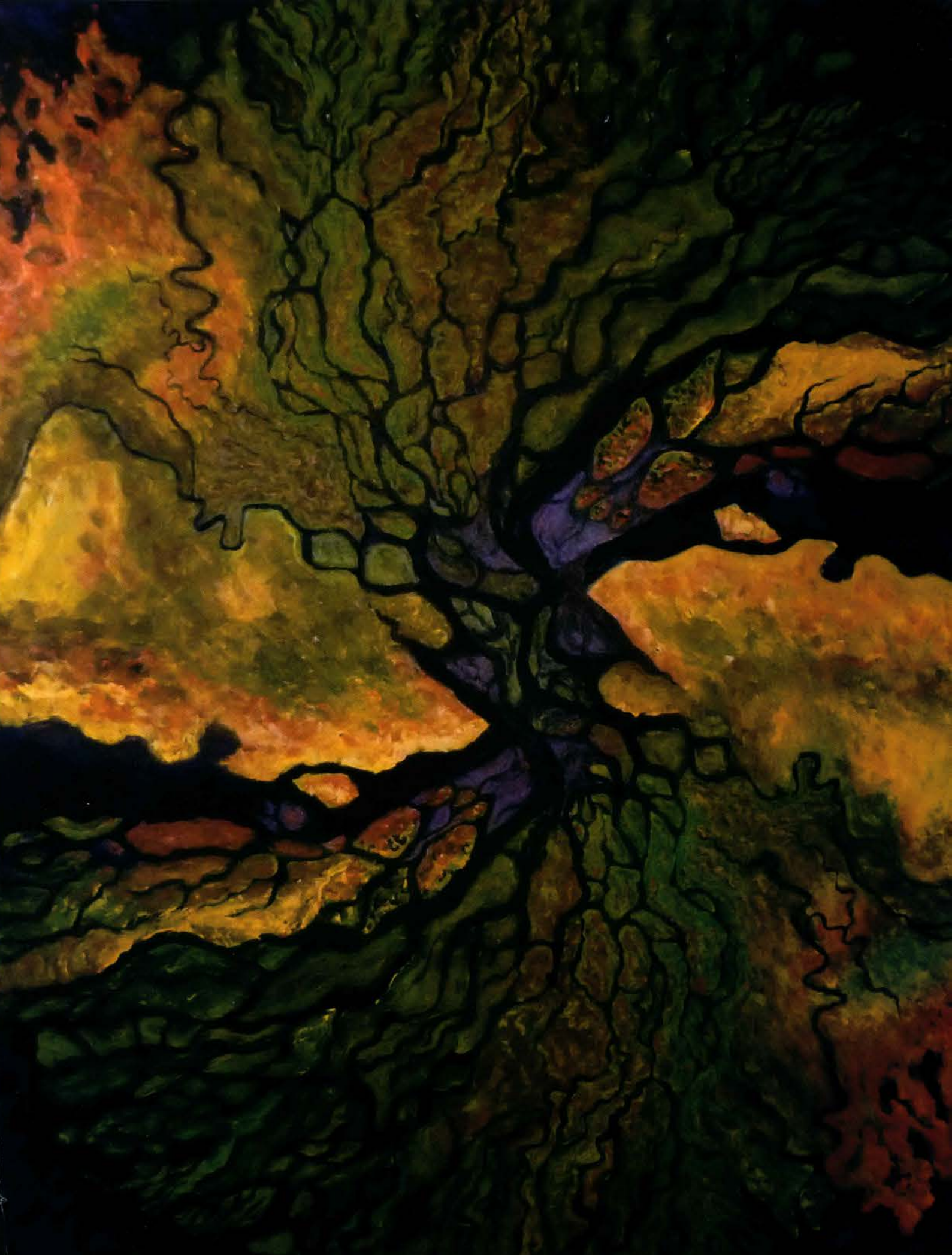
The universe is spilled cinnamon on mama's table. Someone splashed blue paint
and forgot to dab it before soaking
into the meadow-green placemat to my left.

I think a child dared to draw on the table's surface with pastel crayons
but not vivid images.
Just dots and lines and stripy streaks: child art.

Don't discuss gravity at dinner,
or hydrogen cells, or dark energy.
It doesn't sit well once you've had the salad.
And there was no big bang—some sudden release of energy—just my uncle spilling salt.
It left a perfectly placed disaster of color and life.

A foggy glow of colors—
paprika-red and marigold-yellow—
coat the empty spaces between dishes and galaxies. Stellar green halos surround pink-swirled
twists a carpenter painted into the table's wood.

Bursting out of a cluster of nebulae and laughter, the universe is spilled cinnamon:
an accidental creation on mama's table.







Plastic People Eaters

Nitya Prem

•

Plastic people with plastic money make
plastic wars with plastic products.

"I don't have any cash on me.

•

I've got ten bucks until Friday
and no spare change in my pocket."

All the greedy poor people playing at poverty insult
all the poor wealthy people planning a paradise.

"I don't have any cash on me.

I've got a spare line of credit

•

and it's burning a hole in my heart."

People people with people money make
people wars with people products.

•

Last Words

W.R. Soasey

Gray pavement flies
by, gray clouds lower, gray hearts
beat, leaving life's last ritual.

Your gift sits on the dash, whispering
dainty blue-and-green flowers call
Open me, open me, OPEN ME.
I pass the edge of restraint.

Out spill big, black, riffled,
heavy, heavy words marching across
vellum.
You climb them to your perch and gaze down
upon your narrow view, way down at me.

I peer inside the female curves of Plexiglas,
red bubbles of blood, red as pain.
Droplets, tears,
ever-morphing, never still.
They understand the sustenance of grudges.

Did you look the duty in the eye
or just glance in the rearview mirror
at the small bits of flesh that cry your name
strewn on asphalt ribbons leading back
to yesterday?



The Crystal

Kerstin A. La Cross

Digital painting



Earth's Fractal Labyrinth

Shannon Merrigan

Acrylic on canvas

12 x 20"



Pathos Winter 2015-2016 Team

Editor-in-Chief **Philip King**

Copy Editor **Alex Fus**

Art Editor **Jackie Tran**

Social Media Manager **Hayley Wilson**

Volunteers **Alexander Henry, Melina Hughes, Dory Athey**

Student Media Coordinator **Reaz Mahmood**

Calling all Portland State writers and artists!

Perhaps the dull of winter or the demands of life beyond creative projects kept you from submitting work to *Pathos Literary Magazine* this term. Maybe you decided to bide your time or to spruce up some work for next term—in which case, we appreciate your forethought. Maybe you tried your hand this term, but we at *Pathos* chose to present other pieces—in which case, we apologize and hope that hasn't deterred you from continuing to create, create, create. Maybe you're a contributor we published this term, and you're already plotting your next artistic move! Regardless of who you are or how it turned out these past 10 weeks, we'd love to hear from you next term.

We received a thoughtful, evergreen collection of poems, tales, paintings, drawings, and photographs this term, but there comes a time after every feast when we must loosen our belts, unbutton our jeans, and call our bellies full. Don't worry, though. We'll be opening our next reading period soon.

Mark your calendars for **March 28th, 2016**. When the new season comes, send us your blossoming, blooming, beautiful creations. We encourage you to take the time for spring cleaning then share with us your polished work. We can't wait to hear from you, no matter who you are or what you offer as long as you're a student.

While we were excited to see so much visual artwork and insightful poetry, *Pathos* would especially love to see short fiction next term. Whether it's punchy flash fiction; a half-fantasy, half-documentary tale of time spent in Venice chasing ghosts; or a raucous recounting of Dionysian spring break de-inhibition, we want you to share it with us. Maybe we'll share it with the world, and you'll get some publishing credits under your belt.

Keep an eye on our website and our Facebook and Submittable pages for announcements, blog posts, and information about how, what, and when to submit.

In the meantime, you can email us at any hour with any questions or concerns you may have, at pathosliterarymag@gmail.com. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

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